



WEEKLY TOPICS FOR WFS GROUP MEETINGS

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These weekly topics provide an entire year of group discussions while working through the WFS “New Life” Program of Thirteen Statements, with a month devoted to each statement. Each woman in your group should work on that particular statement every day for one whole month.

1. **Statement #1, “I have a life-threatening problem that once had me.” (I now take charge of my life and my well-being. I accept the responsibility.)** (WFS Program Booklet)
2. **“Denial”** (Volume 5 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Denial to alcoholics is like apple pie to motherhood; they are almost inseparable.

Denial is that defensive mechanism we used for so many years when confronted with our drinking and anti-social behavior: “Drinking too much? Of course, I’m not!” Or, “No, I did not drink a half a bottle of gin; I only had three drinks. You saw that!” Or, “Me, an alcoholic? You must be out of your mind! I go to work every day, don’t I?” Or, “You know I’d quit if I were drinking too much, but I’m not.” Or, “You know I can quit anytime I want to.”

And so the litany of denial goes on and on, never stopping until entering the detoxification unit and then sometimes it still continues.

But the question we should probe is, “Do we carry this habit and pattern of denial into our sobriety?”

3. **“The Woman Alcoholic”** (Volume 1 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Not all women drink because of a specific emotional loss. Some women drink to overcome loneliness, to cover up feelings of inadequacy, to combat sexual hang-ups, to dispel boredom, to deaden feelings of self-disgust.

Boredom, frustration, loneliness, lack of self-esteem ... all of these are reasons women drink, but the most important reason is to cope with the terrible need for love if it is not fulfilled. It is the kind of love not found in a sexual relationship but a kind of love that is deeper and more primal.

When a woman does not feel needed or when she cannot express this all-encompassing love, a sense of unworthiness possesses her and she ceases to care much for anything. When this great reservoir of love is unexpressed, she turns to drinking as a means of dampening the pain of emptiness within self.

4. **“The Disgrace of a Poor Sobriety”** (Volume 6 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Our sobriety should be a lifetime that is rich in growing and expansion of ourselves in every way.

Sobriety should not be a period of time in which we are down in the mouth, upset because we can't drink any longer. However, I am sure that all of us have seen many alcoholics like that. There are some who spend a lifetime wishing they could still drink, wasting life, energy and thought on something that is never to be again.

Is it the finality of not drinking again that is so disturbing? Do we suddenly become bogged down on our resistance?

Or do we feel drained, lifeless, uncaring about much, even ourselves?

5. **Statement #2, “Negative thoughts destroy only myself.” (My first conscious sober act is to reduce negativity in my life.)** (WFS Program Booklet)

6. **“Who Controls You?”** (Volume 1 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Filled with worry, fears, doubts, problems? Does it seem to get worse as time goes by? Have you lost control of your life?

There are times when most of us feel as if we have lost control; we feel that some cruel fate is plotting against us, that life has chosen us to suffer.

Of course, this simply isn't true. Most of us experience the result of what we have created, consciously or unconsciously. We are the makers of our fate; we are the inventors of our life; we are the authors of the text we live.

We create our own problems; we are responsible for our mistakes.

7. **“Getting Back To The Real World”** (Volume 4 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Sobriety is a period of positive change. Think of it as a time of reward. See it as a period of great forward movement, as a period of positive growth.

This is a period during which you must work toward self-acceptance. If the depression you feel immobilizes you, force yourself into motion, into doing things. Don't sit back and give up. Never permit self-pity in the form of "Why did this have to happen to me?" to get to you, or your sobriety will collapse.

Get on top of life and problems. Take one problem at a time. Know that there is always something you can do about every situation. Never, never feel helpless and overwhelmed.

8. **"More About Depression"** (Volume 1 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Depression often comes from an inner loneliness or an internal feeling of emptiness and, because it is experienced by so many persons, it is being acknowledged as a normal part of the human condition. This does not mean to say that we should ignore doing something about it. We should. But it does mean to say that depression is a common experience and seems to be on the increase. Very often the fullness of activity in our life is a running away from ourselves and the inner feeling of loneliness.

Sometimes depression comes from our not being ourselves. We try to please others and, in the process, lose touch with our own wants and desires.

We must try to find ourselves ... our lost selves ... and a new approach to life. We must see life as an exciting experience and not a drudge. We must view ourselves as creative beings and then we must begin to create ourselves to be the way we want to be.

9. **Statement #3, "Happiness is a habit I am developing."** (Happiness is created, not waited for.) (WFS Program Booklet)

10. **"Happiness"** (Volume 4 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

The real meaning of happiness, and the very substance of a genuine feeling of it, is when we can feel exuberant even though the weather leaves much to be desired.

Happiness, like almost every other emotion we experience, comes first of all from our thinking rather than from external events. We create our happiness by the thoughts we entertain.

Being happy has a great deal to do with an appreciation of each moment of our life. It has to do with our ability to savor the small minutes, our capacity for treasuring the substance of small events within our life, events that we had usually not observed nor enjoyed nor treasured.

11. **“The Joy of Living in the Now”** (Volume 1 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet) (excerpt re-written by Jean)

Good-bye to the shame of yesterday, to the useless waste of time, to the heartbreak, the loneliness, the broken dreams and fractured life.

Hello to a promised tomorrow, not yet here and maybe not to come.

But welcome to this joyous moment of now, to the security of immediacy, to the excitement of time that will be transformed into memory by me, the mistress of myself, the maker of my life's deeds.

12. **“Choices”** (Volume 2 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Have you ever closely watched other persons who are pleased with themselves? They know they look good and feel confidence in themselves. They know that others notice them and admire them, even if it is only superficially for the moment. These persons seem to have made the right choices for themselves as a person. They exude self-confidence.

It becomes evident that one of our first choices must be to create the woman we want to be, the woman we can be happiest in being. Surely this must begin with a belief in ourselves that we are competent women who are capable of being the woman we want to be.

13. **Statement #4, “Problems bother me only to the degree I permit.” (I now better understand my problems. I do not permit problems to overwhelm me.)** (WFS Program Booklet)

14. **“Self-Destruction”** (Volume 4 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Are we programmed to self-destruct?

Have you ever thought that you might be putting blocks in your way to prevent achievement? Some women fear success and its accompanying responsibility so much that, subconsciously, we make ourselves fail. In these past years, when I have made conscious efforts to change, I have noticed that, at times, I seem to be stopping myself from forward motion. One time I said to my friend, “I really ought to do so and so.” My friend said, “Yes, it could be done easily by doing this and doing that,” naming specific actions I could take. What did I say? I enumerated every argument in the book as to why those specific actions she suggested wouldn't work. Actually, I was verbalizing how I would fail, if I did it at all.

15. **“Fear and Worry: Our Common Enemies”** (Volume 6 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Acceptance of the fact that each of us always has some problems can help us to begin our process of overcoming fear and worry. We have probably been guilty of seeing some happy people around us and assumed that they have no problems.

Our assumption is probably wrong. Those persons who are happy and seemingly carefree, have probably learned how to manage, and overcome, domineering worry.

The person, or persons, you envy as trouble-free, have probably had about the same amount of problems, disappointments and hardships that you have had.

The difference between you and them is that they have learned an important lesson about life ... the futility of worry.

16. **“Anxiety”** (Volume 5 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

...Studies have shown that women experience more anxiety than men because of their life situations. Often buried are the feelings and dreams and hopes they once had for themselves, which have been replaced by other feelings for a husband and children. Traditionally women have been cast into roles that have created situations in which anxiety comes to the fore because of conflicting feelings. Women often: depend upon others for security; try to please all of the time; try to avoid arguments for the sake of family peace; try to maintain harmony at all costs, even to self-injury emotionally; are quick to assume blame; feel guilty for wanting something for self before desiring it for family; meet their own needs covertly, producing more guilt.

Situations in a family setting frequently are the sole cause of anxiety felt by women. For a woman with a drinking problem, anxiety almost becomes the disease. Certainly the drinking problem is enhanced by these frustrations and buried feelings. Many women today want to break away from the old patterns but feel guilty and anxious merely thinking the thoughts of breaking away!

We must ask how can anxiety be combated and overcome. Or is it ever overcome? How to deal with it?

17. **Statement #5, “I am what I think.” (I am a capable, competent, caring, compassionate woman.)**
(WFS Program Booklet)

18. **“The Power of Self-Imaging”** (Volume 3 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

It's our attitude that we must work on every day. Remember that the key words of Women for Sobriety are: “We are capable, competent, caring, compassionate women.”

Begin your day, every day, with saying that a number of times. Say it during the day. Say it while you are driving, or walking, or whatever. Make yourself conscious of what you are saying and you will find that you will begin to act and think in different ways. This is “behavior modification” in a mild form. It works when applied. Try it and see how great it will make you feel.

19. **“The Power of Thinking”** (Volume 2 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

As women and as alcoholics, we must do much thinking. We must use our minds to think through our hang-ups, our guilt, our anger, and our fears. We must then move on to creating a new woman, one who has come to know herself through creative thinking.

We must use thought and imagination to create ourselves in the image we choose.

We create ourselves by thinking. We are our minds.

20. **“Becoming”** (Volume 4 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

The element of survival and triumph is in knowing that each of us is capable of far more than we think we are, that we can have confidence in ourselves to overcome stress, that we are molded by our thoughts and that those who think positively will move ahead of those who think negatively, for they will be moving backward.

There is magic in self-imaging and it is for all of us merely by our being diligent in starting and forming a new habit: to begin each day with the imaginative image of ourselves as self-confident and unafraid, assertive and daring, positive and enthusiastic.

Begin...with more than just resolutions. Begin...with the formation of a new habit that will make sobriety a marvelous experience of growth and personal triumph over otherwise defeating circumstances.

21. **Statement #6, “Life can be ordinary or it can be great.”** (Greatness is mine by a conscious effort.) (WFS Program Booklet)

22. **“Becoming”** (Volume 4 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

...I want more than just sobriety. I don't just want to be dry. I want a whole new life, and I want to be a whole new person. That means that, in this New Year, I will consciously strive to be the best of myself. I will work toward that goal.

My list begins with those things I desire the most: to be loving and kind; to be sincere and honest. After those, I begin with the reinforcement of myself: be confident and unafraid; be assertive and daring; be positive and enthusiastic; overcome problems with the least amount of stress possible.

Being the best of ourselves means that we must do a powerhouse job on self-imaging. We must clearly know what we want to become before we can work at becoming it.

23. **“Assertiveness and Risktaking”** (Volume 5 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Perhaps one of the most important goals of our sobriety is in our learning how to overcome feelings of insecurity and fear. For some reason, these two feelings often are intensified when we are sober, perhaps because we are really experiencing them and cannot cover them up with a stiff drink.

Insecurity and fear are felt by most of us at one time or another, yet there are ways to combat these. Usually if we overcome one, the other will also disappear. For example, overcoming the deep-seated feelings of insecurity we have known for a long time will produce enough good feelings to remove fear, that indefinable fear we have lived with for so long.

What do we fear? Failure? Ill health? Lack of money? Divorce? Not being loved? Or do we fear all of these wrapped up together in one gigantic ball of LACK?

24. **“Our New Adventure”** (Volume 1 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

After the pain of alcoholism, we are ready for a new adventure, because we now know about the disease we have and the way to arrest it.

Now we must move on to the adventure of life, unencumbered with hangovers, nausea, headaches, shakes, fear, depression.

Now we are in control of life’s situations, for we are in control of ourselves and we are no longer manipulated by a bottle.

We are free to be whatever we choose to be.

Our new life is an exciting experience. We must be rid of seeing life as a drudgery of long days stretching into endless time. Each day is a new beginning. Welcome it as a time to grow, as an experience in becoming someone new.

25. **Statement #7, “Love can change the course of my world.”** (Caring is all-important.) (WFS Program Booklet)

26. **“Relationships”** (Volume 4 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

The trend of the times is to talk about one’s relationships. Five years ago, the talk about relationships was nowhere to be heard. But now, it is of prime importance.

Quite true, it is of prime importance but why all of a sudden? Is it because we are in a self-appreciation period? Self-examination?

For alcoholics, all this talk about relationships is vastly important, because alcoholics have many problems with relationships, not necessarily forming them, but maintaining them.

Relationships are difficult because, if we give too much of ourselves, we lose our identity, and alcoholics have trouble with that to begin with. Then, if we don’t give enough of ourselves, we stand to lose the relationship itself.

27. **“A Primary Relationship”** (Volume 4 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

It is important that we examine those first fifteen or more years (on the average) that we spent with another woman, one who controlled us, one who taught us, one who created us in almost every way, one who shaped our thinking and unconsciously gave us our attitudes and almost all of our guilt.

For too long we have believed that our mothers loved us unconditionally. Not all of us believed that, but the majority of us did. And, in so many instances, when we learned our mothers loved our fathers along with her loving us, we became jealous, possessive, or rejected in so many cases. How could she love someone else?

Did any of us see our mothers as women? Could we ever have? Do we now?

28. **“Love”** (Reflections for Growth Booklet, July 23)

What are the things we come to love in life? Our parents? Sometimes we do, if we are lucky. A husband? Children? Friends?

How fragile are relationships, how precious.

Today I will be aware of the love I have for others and these precious relationships.

29. **Statement #8, “The fundamental object of life is emotional and spiritual growth.”** (Daily I put my life into a proper order, knowing which are the priorities.) (WFS Program Booklet)

30. **“The Crisis of Growth”** (Volume 3 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

It seems to me that growth is something we all want yet it is what most of us run away from. Not just alcoholics, but all persons. It seems that this might well be the crisis of the human condition. We want the wisdom of growth but we want to remain eternally young in our emotions: impulsive, quixotic, not terribly responsible or dependable, not committed, unencumbered.

Yet, we also want other persons to be dependable, committed to us, and always there, no matter how or what we are. We want all those nice dependable emotions but we don't want to have to entertain them ourselves. Or, as the age-old phrase goes: we want our cake and eat it too. Or, do as I want and not as I do. Or, let me be a schnook without your criticizing me.

The crunch comes when we begin to realize that we get back what we give to others and we must grow up. We must become something other than the person we presently are. We must make some "sacrifices," like quitting drinking and being a real, grown up, dependable woman.

31. **"Make Friends With Challenge"** (Volume 4 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Now is the time of our lives to welcome challenges rather than to back away from them. Now is the time for each of us to find the best in ourselves by trying many new areas of life. So many of us unconsciously permit ourselves to get into ruts of behavior from which we never escape: Tuesday is Business and Professional Women's Club and Friday is errand night and Tuesday we wash our hair, etc.

Learning how to break away from set living patterns is a challenge in itself. It is not easy for us to change our behavior. We know, for we changed a pattern when we quit drinking.

We are successful with challenges when we take charge of them and don't permit them to intimidate us.

32. **"Being In Touch With Self"** (Volume 2 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Certainly each one of us has observed, at one time or another, that we are two persons: the public person and the private person.

The public person is our outer person. It is the one that is always being judged. It is the one that we take care of to present in the best way possible. It is the person we wash and dress and make attractive. It is the person that others see.

However, it is our inner person that is of greater importance. It is the person we live with and with whom we are constantly having a dialogue with. Plato said we all have an inner companion with whom we are always speaking.

This person is our conscious self. It is the voice within us that tells us how we feel about ourselves. Our inner voice will always be with us, and this is the reason we should spend time on nurturing it. Treat the inner you to compliments, to positive feelings about yourself. Put aside the critical dialogues and work with a positive creative you, the inner you of oneness with self.

33. **Statement #9, “The past is gone forever.” (No longer am I victimized by the past. I am a new woman.)** (WFS Program Booklet)

34. **“Guilt”** (Volume 2 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Of this, Webster’s Dictionary says: “A state of having done wrong.”

Does there live any person who has not, at one time or another, experienced a feeling of guilt for some act, large or small? Guilt is a feeling that is common to all but, to alcoholics, it is a constant demon.

Why do alcoholics feel so much guilt? Is it because we do irresponsible and often times unforgivable acts while we are in a condition of slavery to our addiction? Is it because the alcohol has made our acts to be those of someone other than the decent person we believe ourselves to be?

Usually the worst part of the guilt alcoholics know, especially women alcoholics know, is the inability to forget. We cannot forget because we have great difficulty in forgiving ourselves.

35. **“Guilt: A Special Problem”** (Volume 1 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

We are our own judge and jury. Even worse than that, we sentence ourselves to a lifetime of guilt feelings.

Guilt feelings are devastatingly destructive. They smother creativity, they bury self-esteem, they obliterate any and all feelings that could bring us peace and contentment. They destroy us as persons and crush us as women.

Isn’t it time for probation? Time to be let off the hook for good behavior?

36. **“Forget”** (Volume 1 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

How much debris do we carry with us into sobriety from those nightmare days of drinking?

Too frequently we are weighed down with depression, feelings of guilt, remorse, and other equally debilitating emotions from those unreal days of addiction.

Brooding over past mistakes prevents us from living in the present moment. It occupies and preoccupies our mind so that concentration and enjoyment of immediate happenings is obliterated. Have you ever been greatly annoyed with someone whose mind strays from the conversation? When we permit ourselves to dwell on the past, we are just like that but in a different way.

We must be like mountain climbers and leave the weight behind us as we make our climb to the top, as we make our way out of the canyon of gloom.

Discuss the ways each of you keeps mentally centered in the now.

37. **Statement #10, "All love given returns." (I am learning to know that I am loved.)** (WFS Program Booklet)

38. **"Love"** (Reflections for Growth Booklet, July 24)

Without love, life is merely an exercise in existence.

We were made to love - to give and receive it and, when we don't, we are like robots moving from one lifeless experience to another.

Today I will express love for others.

39. **"Love"** (Reflections for Growth Booklet, August 5)

I love peanuts, peaches, dogs, little old ladies, walking along a beach, moonlit June evenings, the first snow, awaking in the early morning and watching dawn and sunrise, working in the garden, walking in the woods, meditating....

These loves may seem too unimportant to be considered "loves," but they are the fabric of greater love each of us is capable of.

40. **"Love"** (Reflections for Growth Booklet, August 3)

How many times have each of us heard the words, "I love you"? But have we heard them? Have we let our hearts listen and know?

There are times when I wonder if it is too late to listen carefully to, "I love you."

Today - and every day - I will hear the words said to me.

41. **Statement #11, "Enthusiasm is my daily exercise." (I treasure the moments of my new life.)** (WFS Program Booklet)

42. **“Enthusiasm”** (Reflections for Growth Booklet, August 12)

Can you remember the last time you met an enthusiastic woman? Was it weeks ago? Months ago? Years ago?

Enthusiasm is a forgotten emotion. We are so busy “sharing” our feelings, our thoughts, our interests, that we overlook experiencing emotion in the present time.

Today I will seriously devote myself to an expression of enthusiasm about my daily chores.

43. **“Enthusiasm”** (Reflections for Growth Booklet, August 11)

Sometimes I hear persons speaking about an upcoming vacation and saying, “I’m very enthusiastic about going on my trip.” Or, “I’m very enthusiastic about my next semester in graduate school.” Or, “I’m really enthusiastic about joining BPW.” [Business & Professional Women]

Feeling enthusiasm about an upcoming event is wonderful, but why not feel enthusiastic about whatever we are presently doing?

Today I will be enthusiastic about today.

44. **“Restlessness”** (Volume 3 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

My belief is that restlessness comes from our not being fulfilled, from our not having an avenue within which to direct this excess of energy and enthusiasm. I believe that moderation is good to just a certain point, because we need something to be totally absorbed in doing. Without a dedication to something meaningful and absorbing, we will continue to be restless.

Throw yourself into something you’ve always wanted to do ... paint, run, swim, tennis, disco lessons ... anything that will absorb your interest.

45. **Statement #12, “I am a competent woman, and I have much to give life.”** (This is what I am, and I shall know it always.) (WFS Program Booklet)

46. **“The Power of Self-Imaging”** (Volume 3 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Mental picturing is a powerful skill we must learn to use in our long journey of changing ourselves into positive, confident, dynamic women who are capable of managing our lives. We always act like the person we think we are. Therefore, we must begin with the knowledge that we are competent, caring, compassionate women. KNOW IT!

How often do we think we will get our lives into shape as soon as all things are perfect or settled or without problems? Yet, our lives will sooner fall into place and become happy if, and when, we begin with our positive self-imagining. The moment we begin to know, and believe that we are competent, caring and compassionate women, our lives will become changed for the better.

47. **“Are You Assertive”** (Volume 2 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

The assertive woman does not dismiss her wants and desires, her hopes and her ambitions. She is not meek and subservient. She learns to act like a person in her own right. She does not identify herself through some other person, such as taking on the identity of her husband or father or friend. She is a whole entity. She feels equal to all and acts in that way.

Women in Women for Sobriety groups can learn assertiveness by speaking up and not feeling intimidated but, rather learning that what she has to say does contribute to all.

By overcoming anxiety to speak, each woman is readying herself to take a larger part in the community. Discuss your attitudes about assertiveness.

48. **“The Magic of Self-Esteem”** (Volume 2 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

We have probably experienced every feeling and emotion that is preventive of any portion of self-esteem: anxiety, guilt feelings, anger and/or rage, humiliation, deprivation, depression, rejection, and other negative and self-defeating emotions.

Getting sober and staying sober is directly dependent upon our image of ourselves. We must first put alcohol aside but, then, we must begin emotional repair. We must begin our sober lives by knowing that our goal is self-esteem. We must learn how that is had and what we must do to get it.

We now know that it is comprised of self-confidence and self-respect.

We must become worthy of living by making ourselves competent to live, by dedicating ourselves to learning what we are and how we can become better.

49. **Statement #13, “I am responsible for myself and for my actions.” (I am in charge of my mind, my thoughts, and my life.)** (WFS Program Booklet)

50. **“What About Reliability?”** (Volume 2 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

...the number of responsible women are few and far between. Has our culture made us feel unimportant to the point of making us unreliable?

Do we feel we make so little difference that it's not important to respond to others?

Now sober, are you reliable? Are you dependable? Do you follow through with what you say you'll do?

51. **"Groups and Relating"** (Volume 4 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

The glue that a group provides is support for the newcomer. Too often we feel that whatever our problem is, we are the only ones suffering from it. When in point of fact, hundreds of other persons in our same city are suffering from exactly the same feelings as we are.

Our support in a group comes not only from the support of the numbers of people who surround us, but also from our identification with them when they speak about their problem, which happens to be our problem too. With this identification, we are able then to communicate our feelings, our weaknesses, our fears, and ... later on ... our strengths. We begin then to share.

If there is an identifiable process of what happens to us in a group, it must surely be that first we feel the support from the numbers surrounding us in terms of people; then we identify with what they are saying; then we share what we are feeling; then we begin to communicate with each other, because they too continue the sharing process, which now includes us.

52. **"Commitment"** (Volume 3 ~ Collection of Sobering Thoughts Booklet)

Commitment is a necessary part of life. However, it is the kind of commitment that does not involve total immersion of self into the life of another that is a fulfilling and healthy commitment. We are committed to our children, to our parents, to our country, and to our husbands. But we should not be so committed or so immersed that we lose ourselves.

Commitment begins with self ... we must be committed to ourselves first, committed to being a healthy, vibrant woman, committed to our own integrity of self and self-worth.